

# Increasing Participation of Wounded Warriors and Individuals with Disabilities

## Finding and Recruiting Schedule A Candidates

*Matthew Tropicano*

In fiscal year 2009, employees with disabilities were less than 1 percent of the federal government workforce—a decline since FY 2000 and short of the 2 percent goal set by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—a goal that only 11 federal agencies have reached.

To remedy this, President Obama issued Executive Order 13163 on July 26, 2010. It directs the head of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in consultation with the secretary of Labor, the chair of the EEOC, and the director of the Office of Management and Budget, to develop mandatory training programs. It also commits the government to hiring 100,000 individuals with disabilities in the next 5 years.

Enabling the success of Executive Order 13163 is the Schedule A hiring authority, which allows agencies to hire or appoint persons with disabilities using a much shorter process than the usual 6-9 months. Depending on security and other pre-employment requirements, using Schedule A authority can shorten the hiring time to anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 months. The regulations guiding this instruction can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The citation is 5 CFR § 213.3102(u).

### Why Use Schedule A?

Because of the low percentages of individuals with disabilities in the federal government compared with the civilian labor force, individuals with disabilities are an untapped source of excellent applicants. Schedule A has greatly facilitated the process of hiring an individual with a disability; no public notice is required, and the amount of time to perform the usual human resource related procedural steps is greatly reduced or avoided. Consequently, Schedule A can greatly reduce the time necessary to hire a well-qualified candidate. In

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# **JOBS**



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In addition, the federal government's growing emphasis on telework will dovetail well with the needs of many applicants with disabilities. Finally, agencies using Schedule A will not have to clear Priority Placement Program (PPP) lists, Re-employment Priority List (RPL) lists, or other mandated priority hiring lists prior to using Schedule A. In short, when a manager uses Schedule A, he/she is not required to go through the certificate process; he/she can choose to pick the Schedule A candidate.

### **Who Qualifies to Be a Schedule A Candidate?**

Schedule A candidates are people with severe intellectual, physical, or psychiatric disabilities. Disabled veterans with disability ratings of 30 percent or more from the Department of Veterans Affairs also meet the Schedule A requirements. To be Schedule A certified, an applicant needs only a letter from his/her doctor, rehabilitation specialist, or another government entity stating that he/she has a severe disability and can do the job for which he/she has applied.

### **Resources for Hiring**

Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) is the systems command that delivers and maintains quality and sustainable facilities, acquires and manages capabilities for the Navy's expeditionary combat forces, provides contingency engineering response, and enables energy security and environmental stewardship. NAVFAC, with locations across the United States and in countries around the world, currently employs 996 individuals with disabilities, including 799 wounded warriors. From 2010 to 2011, the number of wounded warriors working at NAVFAC increased 21.8 percent, and the number of individuals with disabilities working at NAVFAC increased 12.5 percent. NAVFAC Southeast, NAVFAC Midwest, and NAVFAC Southwest increased their wounded warrior populations 21 percent, 23 percent, and 24 percent, respectively. NAVFAC Headquarters increased its wounded warrior population by 50 percent, and NAVFAC Hawaii increased its wounded warrior population by 56 percent.

There are several excellent sources of qualified wounded warrior applicants. The Navy Human Resource Service Centers (HRSCs) can provide hiring managers and recruiting personnel with regular updates of wounded warriors Schedule A candidates including their desired occupation, educational background, qualifications, and geographical field of interest. These resumes can be accessed by sending an e-mail to the HRSC's point of contact. NAVFAC has hired several wounded warriors through this source. For wounded warrior lists from HRSC-Southwest in San Diego, e-mail Dennis Eley at [dennis.eley1@navy.mil](mailto:dennis.eley1@navy.mil); for wounded warrior lists from HRSC-NE in Philadelphia, e-mail Jason Simms at [jason.simms@navy.mil](mailto:jason.simms@navy.mil); for wounded warrior lists from HRSC-E, e-mail Corey Young at [corey.young@navy.mil](mailto:corey.young@navy.mil); and for wounded warrior lists from DC Capital Area Region, e-mail Jenna Sarrafin at [jenna.sarrafin.ctr@navy.mil](mailto:jenna.sarrafin.ctr@navy.mil).

The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Shared Register of Candidates with Disabilities is a database of Schedule A candidates. OPM, in collaboration with the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) Council, established a contract to populate a shared register of individuals with disabilities who have an interest in working for federal agencies and who satisfy the requirements of positions federal agencies are frequently required to fill. On a monthly basis, a minimum of 50 individuals are recruited, screened, and directed to the shared register. This regularly updated register is available on a biweekly basis for anyone who requests it. For more information on OPM's Shared Register, e-mail Sherry Homme at [shomme@benderconsult.com](mailto:shomme@benderconsult.com).

Equal Opportunity Publications (<http://www.eop.com/expos.php>) coordinates career fairs for individuals with disabilities. They will also provide files of resumes for attendees. These files can be filtered to access the Schedule A candidates.

NAVFAC's Corporate Recruiting Resume Tool also enables hiring managers to search for Schedule A candidates among all the applicants to NAVFAC. A manager can search for wounded warriors with this tool as well.

### **Other Potential Sources of Schedule A Candidates**

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) provides another source of candidates with disabilities for federal employment. The WRP program was created in the 1980s as an internal Department of the Navy effort and was expanded in the mid-1990s to serve the entire federal government under the sponsorship of the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

The WRP helps connect federal agencies nationwide with college students and recent graduates with disabilities looking for summer, temp, and permanent jobs. The WRP provides a database of candidates representing a wide variety of career fields. The most recent database included 104 career fields.

Agencies can employ summer interns through the WRP and can use WRP as a source of candidates for both temporary and permanent positions. DoD has central funding that provides salaries for a defined number of WRP candidates for summer positions. Furthermore, the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) arranges for job accommodations without cost to the DoD agency for the summer hires. WRP can be a great pipeline for increasing the number of students with disabilities at your agency.

### How WRP Works

So far in 2011, 87 trained recruiters from 20 federal agencies have visited over 200 college campuses. More than 2,200 candidates, including undergraduate, graduate, and law students, were interviewed and accepted into the database. Students in the database are categorized by job interest, degree program, geographic location, and other factors. The comments of the recruiters are included in each student's database profile. The database holds resumés and college transcripts that can be downloaded. The database is then opened to all agencies nationwide in early December and is active for 1 year. Some students are Schedule A eligible, and some are disabled veterans. Hiring managers can use the student internship programs (currently the Student Temporary Employment Program [STEP] and the Student Career Experience Program [SCEP]) to offer employment opportunities.

Since its inception, the WRP program has provided permanent jobs and internship opportunities to more than 6,500 students. DoD is by far WRP's biggest user.

### Other Sources

Operation Warfighter is a federal unpaid internship program that assists recovering wounded, ill, and injured (WII) service members by providing internships for 15-20 hours per week on average. It enables the wounded warriors to rehabilitate and adjust into the workforce while also providing federal agencies with dedicated employees. This program is open to all WII service members assigned to a Service wounded warrior program. If interested in this program, contact Patrick Brick, the Operation Warfighter Program Manager, at [patrick.brick.ctr@osd.mil](mailto:patrick.brick.ctr@osd.mil), or Corey Hixson, the Operation Warfighter National Capital Region coordinator, at [cory.hixson.ctr@osd.mil](mailto:cory.hixson.ctr@osd.mil).

State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (SVRAs) and state Disability Service agencies recruit potential applicants with disabilities. SVRAs provide counseling, evaluation, training, and other services to individuals with disabilities. SVRAs are one of several sources that candidates may use to obtain proof of disability and certification of job readiness required under the Schedule A appointing authority for people with disabilities. For more information, go to [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ose/rsr/](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ose/rsr/). In addition, State Disability Service agencies, such as State mental health agencies, frequently have employment training programs and can be a good recruitment resource. Find your state's VR office at: <http://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902>

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### Training Managers

A recent survey found that only half the federal managers interviewed had the knowledge and tools to hire employees with disabilities. A recent article in *Government Executive* indicated that more than 1 in 3 (36 percent) managers said they were not familiar with Schedule A. Many untrained managers may fear that hiring an individual with a disability will be financially burdensome. Training can reduce that fear.

In a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled "Leading Practices That Could Increase the Employment of Individuals with Disabilities in the Federal Workforce," one of the top 10 leading practices identified for increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities in the federal workforce was "training staff at all levels regarding the implementation of policies and procedures related to improving employment of people with disabilities." The GAO report noted that this training may increase hiring managers' sensitivities to disability issues as well as improve and increase usage of Schedule A and other hiring authorities. Training is imperative!!

### Conclusion

It takes an average of 102 days to complete all the steps in the competitive hiring process, from making the request, to making the appointment to bring the person on board. Schedule A is a great alternative to that process and greatly facilitates the hiring an individual with a disability. NAVFAC has taken advantage of the available networks within the Navy and federal government to increase the numbers of qualified and excellent wounded warriors and individuals with disabilities working at NAVFAC. Trained and equipped with Schedule A hiring authority and provided with the resources, NAVFAC and other agencies are well positioned to increase their numbers of wounded warriors and individuals with disabilities while gaining great employees.

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